

RESOLUTION NO. RS2018-1286

A resolution recognizing July 9, 2018 as the 100th anniversary of the Dutchman's Curve train wreck.

WHEREAS, July 9, 2018 will mark the 100th anniversary of the train wreck at Dutchman's Curve, the deadliest train accident in American history; and

WHEREAS, on the morning of July 9, 1918, two Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway passenger trains collided head-on at a combined speed in excess of 100 miles per hour at Dutchman's Curve, located in present day Belle Meade area; and

WHEREAS, the No. 1 train pulled by locomotive No. 282, left Memphis 35 minutes behind schedule, while the No. 4 train pulled by locomotive No. 281, left Union Station 10 minutes after its 7:00 a.m. scheduled departure; and

WHEREAS, ordinarily, the local train would wait on a section of double track near Centennial Park for the overnight express train to clear the single track section; and

WHEREAS, a grave communication error between one of the train conductors and tower operators caused both trains to enter the single-track section of the railway at the same time; and

WHEREAS, the No. 4 train failed to wait for the No. 1 train at the appointed place, causing the two trains to collide on a 10 mile single-track section known as Dutchman's Curve; and

WHEREAS, the impact crushed many of the wooden cars, telescoped some cars, and caused other cars to de-rail into surrounding cornfields; and

WHEREAS, the sound of the collision could be heard two miles away; and

WHEREAS, the Interstate Commerce Commission listed the official death toll as 101 people, although some reports listed the death toll as high as 121, and at least 171 people were injured; and

WHEREAS, most of the victims were African American laborers from Arkansas and Memphis, traveling in overloaded wooden train cars to work at the gunpowder plant located in Old Hickory; and

WHEREAS, as many as 50,000 people came to witness the site of the accident that day, and to help rescue survivors and search for loved ones; and

WHEREAS, the tragic loss of life at the Dutchman's Curve train wreck prompted railroad companies across the United States to eventually stop using wooden passenger train cars for good; and

WHEREAS, in remembrance of the 90th anniversary of the Dutchman's Curve train wreck, the Metro Historical Commission placed a historical marker near the crash site on White Bridge Pike to recognize and bring awareness to a significant moment in Nashville's history; and

WHEREAS, on the 100th anniversary, it is fitting and proper that the Metropolitan Council recognize this tragic, historical moment in Nashville's history, and honor the victims of the Dutchman's Curve train wreck.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY:

Section 1. The Metropolitan Council hereby goes on record as recognizing the 100th anniversary of the Dutchman's Curve train wreck.

Section 2. This Resolution shall take effect from and after its adoption, the welfare of the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County requiring it.

INTRODUCED BY:

Kathleen Murphy
Member of Council